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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/815,099	03/30/2004	Michael J. Sutherland	FS1-0005US	6569
29150 7590 02/17/2011 LEE & HAYES, PLLC 601 W. RIVERSIDE AVENUE SUITE 1400 SPOKANE, WA 99201				
EXAMINER ABDELSALAM, FATHI K				
ART UNIT 3689		PAPER NUMBER		
NOTIFICATION DATE 02/17/2011		DELIVERY MODE ELECTRONIC		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/815,099

Applicant(s)

SUTHERLAND ET AL.

Examiner

Fathi Abdelsalam

Art Unit

3689

Period for Reply -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 01/11/2011.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,4-17, 19-31, 33,36-42,44-54,56 and 57 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,4-17, 19-31, 33,36-42,44-54,56 and 57 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-946)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is a non-final action in response to applicant's Request for Continued Examination (RCE) filed on 1/11/2011, wherein claims 1, 33 and 56 have been amended and claims 18 and 43 cancelled by applicant. Claims 1, 4-17, 19-31, 33, 36-42, 44-54, 56, and 57 are currently pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in:

(1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or

(2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. Claims 1 and 33 are rejected are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being unpatentable over Richman (US Patent 6,754,874).

4. Regarding **Claims 1 and 33**:

Richman discloses a method and recommendation management module for managing recommendations using a computer system, comprising:

receiving, and logic implemented by at least one computer device configured to receive, survey information from an individual serving a first role pertaining to an aspect of an organizational entity, the survey information including at least one recommendation ("In a first aspect of the present invention, a computer-aided method of evaluating personnel performance is provided including the steps of making available to a first user a first electronic form, inputting a first set of data into the first electronic form corresponding to an employee's evaluation" [col. 2, line 16]);

storing, and logic configured to store, the survey information in a computer database associated with a storage medium ("whereby employee evaluation information is stored in a network accessible database, and to a tool for customizing employee evaluation information forms" [col. 3, line 43]);

logic configured to automatically send, responsive to receiving the survey information, the survey information to an individual serving a second role ("In a company. employing Outlook Mail or similar technology, automatic email messages may be generated by using a data feed or other known methods" [col. 4, line 33]). *See also* (Figure 3 – "[320] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider ... [335] Email Automatically Sent to Second Level Reviewer ... [365] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider");

receiving, and logic configured to receive, via a user interface, first recommendation information from an individual serving a second role, the first recommendation information being based on the survey information received from the individual serving the first role ("submitting the first electronic form including the first set

of data for review to a second user and inputting a second set of data into the first electronic form corresponding to the second user's review of the employee" [col. 2, line 21]);

storing, and logic configured to store, the recommendation information in a computer database associated with a storage medium ("whereby employee evaluation information is stored in a network accessible database, and to a tool for customizing employee evaluation information forms" [col. 3, line 43]);

logic configured to automatically notify, responsive to receiving the first recommendation information, an individual serving a third role of the first recommendation information ("In a company, employing Outlook Mail or similar technology, automatic email messages may be generated by using a data feed or other known methods" [col. 4, line 33]). *See also* (Figure 3 – "[320] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider ... [335] Email Automatically Sent to Second Level Reviewer ... [365] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider");

receiving, and logic configured to receive, via the user interface, second recommendation information from an individual serving a third role, the second recommendation information being based on the first information received from the individual serving the second role ("In another aspect of the present invention, the first electronic form including the first and second user data are submitted to a third user for input of a third set of performance evaluation data" [col. 2, line 35]);

storing, and logic configured to store, the second recommendation information in a computer database associated with a storage medium ("whereby employee evaluation

information is stored in a network accessible database, and to a tool for customizing employee evaluation information forms" [col. 3, line 43]);

and

addressing said at least one recommendation based on the first and second recommendation information, the addressing of said at least one recommendation including initiating a response to said at least one recommendation information ("FIG. 3 illustrates, in flow-chart diagram form, the process by which an employee is evaluated for her performance on a particular project" [col. 3, line 36])

and

sequentially provide a recommendation response report to the individual serving the second role and then to the individual serving the third role via the user interface, wherein the recommendation response report includes input fields for receiving the first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role and the second recommendation information from the individual serving the third role ("submitting the first electronic form including the first set of data for review to a second user and inputting a second set of data into the first electronic form corresponding to the second user's review of the employee" [col. 2, line 21]); ("In another aspect of the present invention, the first electronic form including the first and second user data are submitted to a third user for input of a third set of performance evaluation data" [col. 2, line 35]).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1, 4-17, 19-23, 27-31, 33, 36-42, 44-48, 50-54 and 56-57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tschiegg et al. (US PG Publication 20050192963), hereinafter referred to as "Tschiegg," in view of Richman (US Patent 6,754,874).

7. Regarding **Claims 1 and 33**:

Tschiegg discloses a method and recommendation management module for managing recommendations using a computer system, comprising:

receiving, and logic implemented by at least one computer device configured to receive, survey information from an individual serving a first role pertaining to an aspect of an organizational entity, the survey information including at least one recommendation ("the graphics interface accommodates input of interactive recommendations" [0017]). See also ("The database may for example be a SQL database server. The database of one aspect responds to electronically received recommendations regarding a segment of risk management information to post the recommendations with the segment of risk management information" [0016]). See also

("the graphic data may include one or more graphical reports such as a fire protection, recommendation summary, loss prevention survey report delivery, loss prevention survey report schedule, risk quality benchmarking, risk quality rating, management programs, building construction, catastrophe, active recommendations, and completion status" [0013]);

wherein the individual serving the first role is a field consultant who serves the role of inspecting the organizational entity to determine whether it satisfies a defined criterion ("Remotely located associates or network peers may be tasked to collect information at the customer's request, for example, when the associate inspects a customer's facilities" [0177]).

storing, and logic configured to store, the survey information in a computer database associated with a storage medium ("In another aspect, the database responds to inputs by a user with authorized access, at a computer networked with the database, to securely store electronic documents with the risk management information associated with the user" [0015]);

receiving, and logic configured to receive, via a user interface, first recommendation information originating from the individual serving the second role, the first recommendation information being provided responsive to the survey information received from the individual serving the first role ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]);

storing, and logic configured to store, the recommendation information in a computer database associated with a storage medium (See Paragraph [0015]);

receiving, and logic configured to receive, via the user interface, second recommendation information originating from an individual serving a third role, the second recommendation information being based on the first information received from the individual serving the second role ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]);

storing, and logic configured to store, the second recommendation information in a computer database associated with a storage medium (See Paragraph [0015]); and

addressing said at least one recommendation based on the first and second recommendation information, the addressing of said at least one recommendation including initiating a response to said at least one recommendation information. ("The resulting data is particularly useful in providing recommendations to customers, and the system may also provide a reporting and tracking mechanism subject to one or both of recommendation fulfillment and recommendation rejection" [0029]);

and

sequentially provide a recommendation response report to the individual serving the second role and then to the individual serving the third role via the user interface, wherein the recommendation response report includes input fields for receiving the first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role and the second

recommendation information from the individual serving the third role ("Reports 2522 and recommendations 2524 may for example be displayed on a computer screen as graphic data 34', FIG. 1. From the recommendations summary screen, the user may 'click' on a specific line of data (e.g., a specific recommendation) and access the recommendation comments screen 2526. Via comments screen 2526, a user may read an archived history of comments made relative to specific recommendations (or sub-recommendations) and may also make comments, adjust status, change intent, set target dates, access full text of the recommendations, review high level cost-benefit analysis information, access standards and guidelines, engage the system to e-mail the full text of the recommendation(s), summary data and/or comment history (collectively the "data sets" 2528)" [0153]);

wherein the individual serving the first role, the individual serving the second role, and the individual serving the third role are different individuals ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]).

Although Tschiegg teaches the automated sending of emails to users ("e-mail notification engine cooperate to automatically generate an e-mail when new information is posted to the risk management database...[t]he email is addressed to a user at an access terminal that has the appropriate authorizations" [0011]). See also ("An email notification server and/or application provide for communicating email to an authorized user of the one segment to notify the authorized user of the augmented information"

[0024]), the reference fails to explicitly disclose the automatic sending of emails to a chain of reviewers.

However, Richman teaches:

responsive to receiving the survey information, automatically sending the survey information to an individual serving a second role; and responsive to receiving the first recommendation information, automatically notifying an individual serving a third role of the first recommendation information [col. 4, line 33]). *See also* (Figure 3 – “[320] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider ... [335] Email Automatically Sent to Second Level Reviewer ... [365] Email Automatically Sent to Feedback Provider”).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to have modified the system and method of Tschiegg so as to have included survey delivery functionality to a number of reviewers, as taught by Richman, in order to provide for convenient access to reviews via a chain of users, since so doing could be performed readily and easily by any person of ordinary skill in the art, with neither undue experimentation, nor risk of unexpected results.

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a first role (e.g. “field consultant,” inspector, technician, etc.) has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded no patentable weight.

8. Regarding **Claim 4**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the defined criterion pertains to safeguards against property loss within the organizational entity,

and said at least one recommendation pertains to a measure designed to reduce property loss ("users can manipulate recommendation cost benefit analysis information to reconcile the informational content of database 20 with actual events. This provides improved predictive accuracy by comparing, for example, total loss estimates before damage occurs versus actual total loss after damage occurs; property damage loss estimates before damage occurs versus actual property damage loss after damage occur" [0172]). See also ("Risk reduction=[(property loss before+business interruption loss before)-(property loss after +business interruption loss after)-Estimated Cost to Complete]" [0173])

9. Regarding **Claim 5**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the individual serving the second role is a risk manager who serves the role of evaluating and addressing risk-related issues associated with the organizational entity ("When system 10 is used to provide a recommendation, users are available to assess the recommendation by viewing the impact upon the facility's overall risk quality rating" [0175]).

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a second role, and the specific issue evaluated, has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded little patentable weight.

10. Regarding **Claim 6**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the individual serving the second role is a facility manager who serves the role of coordinating the implementation of risk-reduction measures within a facility ("At exit conference 2504, the field associate consults with facility management to configure new commitments and recommendations resulting from survey 2502" [0150]).

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a second role, and the specific measure coordinated, has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded little patentable weight.

11. Regarding **Claim 7**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the individual serving the third role is a risk manager who serves the role of evaluating and addressing risk-related issues associated with the organizational entity ("When system 10 is used to provide a recommendation, users are available to asses the recommendation by viewing the impact upon the facility's overall risk quality rating" [0175]).

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a third role, and the specific issue evaluated, has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded little patentable weight.

12. Regarding **Claim 8**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the individual serving the third role is a facility manager who serves the role of coordinating the

implementation of risk-reduction measures within a facility ("At exit conference 2504, the field associate consults with facility management to configure new commitments and recommendations resulting from survey 2502" [0150]).

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a third role, and the specific measure coordinated, has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded little patentable weight.

13. Regarding **Claim 9**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the organizational entity is a business having multiple facilities ("graphs to compare a company's facilities to outstanding recommendations associated with risk management information 12" [0098]). See also ("elements across facilities" [0166]).

14. Regarding **Claim 10**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the receiving of the first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role and the receiving of second recommendation information from the individual serving the third role comprises sequentially providing a recommendation response report to the individual serving the second role and then to the individual serving the third role via the user interface, wherein the recommendation response report includes input fields for receiving the first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role and from the second recommendation information from the individual serving the

third role ("All reports 2904, 2910, 2914, 2918, 2922 may be interactively edited for adjustment or modification, as deemed desirable by the user" [0162]). See also ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]). See also ("FIGS. 6-24 collectively illustrate a flow chart for computer process operations that operate on the data elements shown in FIGS. 5A-5H with the assistance of user input and system output provided by graphic display screens and system components suitable for use and operation with system of FIG. 1" [0045]).

15. Regarding **Claims 11 and 36**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 10, and the respective management module according to claim 33, wherein the user recommendation report includes a first section for receiving the first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role and a second section for receiving the second recommendation information from the individual serving the second role ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]).

See also ("The reporting engine may summarize the risk management information, for example, by reporting from the database using user-defined data filtration parameters, calculating statistics, producing counts of data fields, adding loss

estimate data to represent a total exposure value, or plotting data points that associate color codes with levels of risk exposure." [0006]), ("a segment of risk management information to post the recommendations with the segment of risk management information" [0016]) and Paragraph [0013] -- the reports can be sectioned off.

16. Regarding **Claims 12 and 37**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, wherein the receiving of first recommendation information from the individual serving the second role comprises receiving at least one of:

intent information which conveys instructions of the individual serving the second role ("produces a corresponding pop-up report referred to as a "tool tip," which explains the value to the user and how it may be used or applied according to expert instructions" [0164]); and comment information provided by the individual serving the second role ("provides for appending user-generated comments to one or more segments of the risk management information" [0019]).

17. Regarding **Claims 13 and 38**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, wherein the receiving of second recommendation information from the individual serving the third role comprises receiving at least one of:

intent information which conveys the response of the individual serving the third role to instructions of the individual serving the second role ("produces a corresponding pop-up report referred to as a "tool tip," which explains the value to the user and how it may be used or applied according to expert instructions" [0164]); and comment information provided by the individual serving the third role ("provides for appending user-generated comments to one or more segments of the risk management information" [0019]). See also at least: ("A graphics interface generates graphic data of the risk management information in response to the authorized access. Users interact with the system in an I/O context via the graphics interface to access the risk management information" [0006])

18. Regarding **Claims 14 and 39**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including receiving a target date associated with the implementation of said at least one recommendation ("users at computers 14 may set target dates, adjust status, and identify intent so as to better track the recommendation's actual progress towards completion" [0112]).

19. Regarding **Claims 15 and 40**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 14, and the respective management module according to claim 39, further including receiving status information pertaining to the target date ("users at computers 14 may set target dates,

adjust status, and identify intent so as to better track the recommendation's actual progress towards completion" [0112]).

20. Regarding **Claims 16 and 41**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, wherein the user interface includes at least one field having a visual attribute that conveys a level of urgency associated with said at least one field ("plotting data points that associate color codes with levels of risk exposure" [0006])

21. Regarding **Claims 17 and 42**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 16, and the respective management module according to claim 41, wherein said at least one field pertains to a target date field, and the visual attribute is color ("plotting data points that associate color codes with levels of risk exposure" [0006]).

22. Regarding **Claims 19 and 44**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including sending a reminder notification to at least the individual serving the third role if the individual serving the third role fails to enter the second recommendation information within a predetermined

period of time ("The user may also change the frequency of e-mail notification at their own discretion via the same screen" [0011]).

23. Regarding **Claims 20 and 45**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 19, and the respective management module according to claim 44, wherein the predetermined period of time is measured with respect to a time when the individual serving the second role entered the recommendation information ("Email may also be generated periodically to inform the user of interim updates" [0011]). See also ("System 10 may also generate similar email notifications on a periodic basis, e.g., monthly, weekly or daily, to summarize newly posted information within a segment" [0067]).

24. Regarding **Claims 21 and 46**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 19, and the respective management module according to claim 44, wherein the predetermined period of time is measured with respect to a specified target date pertaining to the implementation of said at least one recommendation ("Email may also be generated periodically to inform the user of interim updates" [0011]). See also ("System 10 may also generate similar email notifications on a periodic basis, e.g., monthly, weekly or daily, to summarize newly posted information within a segment" [0067]). See also ("users at computers 14 may set target dates" [0112]).

25. Regarding **Claims 22 and 47**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 19, and the respective management module according to claim 44, further including sending another reminder notification if the individual serving the third role fails to respond to the first-mentioned reminder notification, the other reminder notification conveying greater urgency compared to the first-mentioned reminder notification ("Email may also be generated periodically to inform the user of interim updates" [0011]). See also ("System 10 may also generate similar email notifications on a periodic basis, e.g., monthly, weekly or daily, to summarize newly posted information within a segment" [0067]).

26. Regarding **Claims 23 and 48**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 19, and the respective management module according to claim 44, further including customizing at least one of: a timing at which the reminder notification is to be transmitted ("System 10 may also generate similar email notifications on a periodic basis, e.g., monthly, weekly or daily, to summarize newly posted information within a segment" [0067]); an identity of at least one recipient who is to receive the reminder notification ("The email is addressed to a user at an access terminal that has the appropriate authorizations" [0011]); information content of the reminder notification; and a style of the reminder notification.

27. Regarding **Claims 27 and 50**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including providing a listing that identifies a historical sequence of information entered by the individual serving the first role, the individual serving the second role, and the individual serving the third role ("Via comments screen 2526, a user may read an archived history of comments made relative to specific recommendations (or sub-recommendations)... summary data and/or comment history (collectively the "data sets" 2528). Changes to specific data sets 2528, namely the comments, status, intent, target dates, etc., are ported directly back to database 2512 for update and future access through messenger 2510" [0153]). See also ("A system of claim 28, where the secure database contains a historical archive of risk management features that have been changed through use of the means for reconciling" [Claim 29]).

28. Regarding **Claims 28 and 51**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including filtering received survey information and recommendation information based on at least one selected criterion ("In yet another aspect, the graphics interface provides one or more filter functions to manipulate the risk management information for display of graphic data at a computer networked with the graphics interface" [0012]).

29. Regarding **Claims 29 and 52**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including sorting received survey information and recommendation information based on at least one selected criterion ("Further aspects of the system may include a robust reporting capability that can be used to sort and filter relevant risk management data according to user-specified parameters" [0027]).

30. Regarding **Claims 30 and 53**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including printing received survey information and recommendation information in a selected report format ("A method of claim 50, further comprising a step of exporting the risk management information in a computer readable form" [Claim 75]). See also ("In another example, the reporting engine can provide a location snapshot report that includes summary information for a particular location" [0028])

31. Regarding **Claims 31 and 54**:

Tschiegg discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, further including exporting received survey information and recommendation information into a selected export file format ("A method of claim 50, further comprising a step of exporting the risk management information in a computer readable form" [Claim 75]). See also ("Data may be exported

from the system, for example, as a computer readable form attached to an email. In some embodiments, exportation of data launches a spreadsheet or other analysis program that permits the user to manipulate the data outside the confines of the system" [0041]).

32. Regarding **Claim 56**:

Claim 56 recites substantially similar limitations to claims 1 and 33 and is therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

Tschiegg further discloses:

a plurality of computer devices available to an individual serving a first role, an individual serving a second role, and an individual serving a third role, wherein the individuals serving the first, second, and third roles are different individuals and the first, second, and third roles are different roles ("In another aspect, recommendations may be shared between users through the interface and over the network. By way of example, the recommendations may be shared based upon access and authority levels of accounts, divisions, locations, or individuals" [0021]). See also ("One or more access computers coupled in network with the graphics interface" [0010]);

processing functionality communicatively coupled to the plurality of computer devices via a network ("In another aspect, one or more workflow process terminals connect in network with the database to provide updates to the risk management information. The terminals may for example include a computer, facsimile, telephone and scanner" [0007]);

wherein the processing functionality includes:

a database storage ("In another aspect, the database responds to inputs by a user with authorized access, at a computer networked with the database, to securely store electronic documents with the risk management information associated with the user" [0015]);

wherein the individual serving the first role is a field consultant who serves the role of inspecting the organizational entity to determine whether it satisfies a defined criterion ("Remotely located associates or network peers may be tasked to collect information at the customer's request, for example, when the associate inspects a customer's facilities" [0177]).

Moreover, the nature of the particular individual serving a first role (e.g. "field consultant," inspector, technician, etc.) has been deemed merely intended usage of the claimed invention and therefore accorded no patentable weight.

33. Regarding **Claim 57**:

Claim 57 recites substantially similar limitations to claim 2 and is therefore rejected using the same art and rational set forth above.

34. **Claims 24, 25, 26, and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Richman (US Patent 6,754,874).**

35. Regarding **Claims 24 and 25**:

Richman discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein, in a top-down mode of process flow, the individual serving the second role serves an overseeing role with respect to the individual serving the third role; and wherein, in a bottom-up mode of process flow, the individual serving the third role serves an overseeing role with respect to the individual serving the second role ("submitting the first electronic form including the first set of data for review to a second user and inputting a second set of data into the first electronic form corresponding to the second user's review of the employee" [col. 2, line 21]); ("In another aspect of the present invention, the first electronic form including the first and second user data are submitted to a third user for input of a third set of performance evaluation data" [col. 2, line 35]). See also ("Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a system and method accessible by all employees and administrators for streamlining the collection of evaluation data and the intelligent and fully-informed evaluation of employees based on the collected evaluation data" [col. 2, line 53]).

Alternatively, employing a chain of command structure in a business or governmental environment, wherein a subordinate reports to a leader/overseer is common practice, regardless of who, specifically, is assigned the leader role, and therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's claimed invention would have found this use obvious to have included in the method described above, since so doing could be performed readily and easily by any person of ordinary skill in the art, with neither undue experimentation, nor risk of unexpected results.

36. Regarding **Claims 26 and 49**:

Richman discloses the method according to claim 1, and the respective management module according to claim 33, wherein, in a top-down mode of process flow, the individual serving the second role serves an overseeing role with respect to the individual serving the third role, and, in a bottom-up mode of process flow, the individual serving the third role serves an overseeing role with respect to the individual serving the second role, and, in a no-flow mode of process flow, either the individual serving the second role or the individual serving the third role can enter recommendation information first, and the method further includes allowing a user to define whether the method is to operate in the top-down mode or the bottom-up mode or a no-flow mode ("submitting the first electronic form including the first set of data for review to a second user and inputting a second set of data into the first electronic form corresponding to the second user's review of the employee" [col. 2, line 21]); ("In another aspect of the present invention, the first electronic form including the first and second user data are submitted to a third user for input of a third set of performance evaluation data" [col. 2, line 35]). See also ("Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a system and method accessible by all employees and administrators for streamlining the collection of evaluation data and the intelligent and fully-informed evaluation of employees based on the collected evaluation data" [col. 2, line 53]).

Alternatively, employing a chain of command structure in a business or governmental environment, wherein a subordinate reports to a leader/overseer, or also where business is conducted on a "same-level" team basis in a ad-hoc manner (herein

termed "no-flow mode"), is common practice, regardless of who, specifically, is assigned the leader role, and therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's claimed invention would have found this use obvious to have included in the method described above, since so doing could be performed readily and easily by any person of ordinary skill in the art, with neither undue experimentation, nor risk of unexpected results.

Response to Arguments

37. Applicant's arguments filed 1/11/2011 have been fully considered, but they are not persuasive. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1, 4-17, 19-31, 33, 36-42, 44-54, 56, and 57 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Conclusion

38. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Fathi Abdelsalam whose telephone number is (571) 270-3517. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Thursday 8:00-5:00pm ET.

39. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Janice Mooneyham can be reached on (571) 272-6805. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

40. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/F. A./
Examiner, Art Unit 3689

/Tan Dean D. Nguyen/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3689